CHAPTER 9

# By Way of a Conclusion: Further Explorations into the Determinations of Revolutionary Subjectivity

## Revolutionary Subjectivity as Alienated Subjectivity

In order to make explicit the *necessary* mediation between the content and form of the revolutionary abolition of capital, which is absent from the *Grundrisse*, we must bring back Marx's discussion of the role of the class struggle as presented in *Capital*. As we have seen, both through the discussion of the establishment of a legal working day and the Factory Acts, Marx unfolds the determination of the political action of the working class as the necessary mediation, in the form of a consciously organised collective action, for the imposition of the *general* conscious regulation of social labour in the capitalist mode of production, that is, as a concrete form of the essentially *unconscious* – hence inverted – organisation of social life through the capital form. Furthermore, we saw above that the struggle of wage labourers as a class was also the necessary form in which the total social capital's need for workers with an increasingly universal productive subjectivity, resulting from the movement of the *real* subsumption in the form of large-scale industry, asserted itself. True, in Marx's exposition in Chapter 15 of *Capital*, the class struggle does not transcend its determination as a mediating moment of the total social capital's reproduction. This is because he does not unfold its immanent material content – the socialisation and universal development of human productive subjectivity – up to its absolute limit. But this is precisely what the *Grundrisse* do; they do not unfold a *different* content, but rather develop a more complex shape of that content itself. *A fortiori*, its concrete mode of realisation remains the same: the struggle of wage labourers as a class. A struggle, however, that is no longer determined as form of capital's *reproduction*. As an expression of the plenitude of its content, the political action of wage labourers now becomes determined as the mode of existence of capital-*transcending* human practice.

In effect, I have shown that the material content of the communist transformation of social life precisely consists in the realisation of the plenitude of the two determinations underlying capital's historic mission, namely, the production of a fully developed universal productive subjectivity, which is in turn the necessary form of human *individuality* presupposed by the fully conscious organisation of *social* life as a directly collective process. Thus, as the material

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subject whose productive subjectivity this historic process transforms 'behind its back' in the direction of a fully developed and socialised universality, the working class thereby becomes determined to personify, through its revolutionary political action, the *alienated* necessity of capital to be superseded in the free association of individuals or communism. Fundamental implications follow from this.

When discussing commodity fetishism, I mentioned that behind the traditional Marxist view rests the idea of revolutionary consciousness as the absolute opposite of alienated consciousness. In other words, revolutionary political action is seen as grounded in an abstractly free human subjectivity of the proletariat, which in that capital-transcending practice gets rid of objectified forms of social mediation that constrain the affirmation of their natural freedom. By contrast, what follows from the approach developed here is that revolutionary consciousness can only be a concrete form of the alienated consciousness itself. Let me elaborate on this.

In the first place, this means that the necessity for revolutionary transformation springs from the movement of self-valorising value itself. More concretely, it is a concrete determination of capital's incessant drive to produce relative surplus value. The crux of the matter is that it is a necessity of relative surplus value production, which can only take concrete shape through the abolition of the capital form (hence of surplus value production) itself. To put it differently, that particular cycle of material reproduction of society is *autonomously* set into motion by the valorisation of capital as its immanent purpose. However, the determinate form of the *material* transformation of the labour process – dictated by the most immediate necessity of capital to expand its magnitude – becomes the fully conscious organisation of human productive co-operation. Which, in turn, means that the *social* form of the life process of humanity must be revolutionised as well: it is a change of the materiality of the production process which, albeit required by the valorisation of capital, can no longer proceed on the basis of that alienated general social form.

Perhaps I can flesh out this point more clearly by discussing the following oft-quoted passage from *The Holy Family* in light of Marx's mature critique of political economy:

> Indeed private property drives itself in its economic movement towards its own dissolution, but only through a development which does not depend on it, which is unconscious and which takes place against the will of private property by the very nature of things, only inasmuch as it produces the proletariat as proletariat, poverty which is conscious of its spiritual and physical poverty, dehumanization which is conscious of its

> dehumanization, and therefore self-abolishing … Not in vain does it [the proletariat] go through the stern but steeling school of *labour*. It is not a question of what this or that proletarian, or even the whole proletariat, at the moment *regards* as its aim. It is a question of *what the proletariat is*, and what, in accordance with this *being*, it will historically be compelled to do.[1]

In this passage, Marx still seems to be within the boundaries of the kind of argument developed in the *Paris Manuscripts*, where revolutionary subjectivity seems to be grounded in a generic dialectic of the negation of the negation. Thus, in the proletariat all the inhumanity of private property is concentrated. Therefore, as that human incarnation of the complete negation of humanity, they are bound to revolt against those inhuman conditions. In turn, this revolt against inhuman conditions of life cannot but represent its negation and, therefore, the affirmation of humanity. It is this aspect which is generally emphasised within Marxism. Yet as my discussion of the limitations of that approach should make evident, one must focus elsewhere. The key points are as follows.

First, it is crucial to note how Marx uses the term 'compelled' to refer to the relation of the workers to their own revolutionary activity. I think this shows that for Marx the alienated subject of that historical movement culminating in (hence including) the revolution is capital itself (what he refers to as 'private property'). In this sense, the revolutionary powers are not 'self-developed' by the workers, but are an alienated attribute that capital puts into their own hands through the transformations of their productive subjectivity produced by the alienated socialisation of private labour. This is the reason why *revolutionary consciousness is itself a concrete form of the alienation of human powers as capital's powers*. The abolition of capital is not an abstractly free, self-determining political action, but one that the workers are *compelled* to undertake as *personifications* of the alienated laws of movement of capital itself. In this sense, when the workers consciously organise the revolutionary abolition of the capitalist mode of production, they do so not as the incarnation of the powers of an abstract human practice deprived of social determinations, but as 'character masks' or 'representatives' of the inverted existence of the powers of their social labour, i.e. capital. The point is that it is an alienated action that *in the course of its own development* liberates itself from all trace of its alienated existence. Paraphrasing that passage from the *1859 Contribution*, which I

1 Marx and Engels 1975, pp. 36–7.

quoted toward the end of Chapter 6, individuals 'emerging from the reproduction process are accordingly different from those entering it'. They enter it as wage workers personifying capital's need to produce relative surplus value. Yet, in the course of the revolutionary action they undertake as such personifications, they 'change skin' and emerge as consciously (thus freely) associated fully developed social individuals.

Secondly, this leads to the question of the specific *qualitative content* of revolutionary consciousness. This consciousness is not simply an extension of partial struggles based on the very same 'class identity' constituted around the affirmation of an abstract human freedom against the (apparently) external coercion imposed by the capital-determined modes of social objectivity. Revolutionary political action is such because of the *qualitative* potentiality it embodies, which resides in its being the form in which the fully conscious organisation of social life is historically produced. In this specific determination, *it has to be a fully conscious action itself*. Thus, it is a question not just of struggling against capitalist society as a 'totality', but also of the determinate form in which wage workers *consciously grasp*, as the way of organising that political action, their alienated general social relation. However general in its scope and fierce in its intensity, the political action of workers cannot be determined as revolutionary except when ideally reproducing capital in the totality of its social determinations. In other words, this essentially means that workers must comprehend the determinations of their own social being in their unity beyond any appearance presented by it. This does not only involve seeing through the transposed concrete forms of *objectivity* presented by the alienated consciousness in the capitalist mode of production, i.e. the value form and its concrete development into capital. In addition, it also entails discovering the content behind the most general concrete form of subjectivity assumed by the alienated consciousness of the modern individual, namely, the apparently natural self-determining freedom of the commodity owner. Thus, revolutionary workers must grasp the immanently alienated nature of their own subjectivity or their existence as attributes of the total social capital, which has become the concrete subject of modern society. But this also entails the discovery of the material productive powers that, as capital's mode of existence, they have developed in that inverted form. In this way, workers shall recognise the social necessity of the historical task that, as fully conscious yet *alienated* individuals, they have to personify through their self-abolishing political action, namely, the revolutionary supersession of capital through the production of the communist organisation of social life.

### Revolutionary Subjectivity as Productive Subjectivity

In the traditional Marxist account of the revolutionary abolition of capital, the latter presupposes the development of two sets of clearly distinct necessary conditions: the 'objective' ones (generally associated with one aspect of the 'economic' laws of motion of capital such as its crisis-ridden character, the mechanical impossibility of economic reproduction, the tendency for the concentration and centralisation of capital, generalised barbaric conditions of human civilisation), and the 'subjective' ones (class consciousness and organisation). The whole history of Marxism could be reconstructed on the basis of the ways in which the different currents emphasised one or the other factor, or, alternatively, tried to combine the objective and subjective factors. But what unites most approaches, and, I think, what dooms their attempts at discovering the concrete determinations of revolutionary action to failure, is the complete independence they posit between the *political* consciousness of the working class and the development of the materiality of the production process of human life. Because even when the need for material conditions *is* emphasised, the problem is that the particular condition or set of conditions generally posited as *objectively* grounding the necessity for the abolition of capital (be it a fatal economic crisis or the monopolisation of the property of capital simply as such) has no connection whatsoever with the political subjectivity of the working class. The latter is seen as developing according to its own different 'logic', generally deriving from the determinations of the *formal* subsumption of labour to capital and therefore irrespective of the material transformations of human life. To put it differently, those approaches do not actually pose an inner *material determination* or necessity for the development of the revolutionary *political consciousness* of the working class. As pointed out before, they just provide an objective *context*, which is seen as spurring, accelerating or facilitating the *self-determining* movement of the subjective factor which 'reacts' to those external circumstances. But there is no real mediation between the materiality of social life and the political consciousness of workers. It is this mediation that the approach developed in this book attempts to provide.

As we have seen above, it is the historical necessity for the all-sided development of the universality of productive attributes of the workers beyond its capitalist 'integument' – generated by the alienated movement of capital itself – that is realised in the concrete form of the communist revolution. In this sense, the material determinations for the abolition of capital are not *external* to the concrete individuality of workers. Rather, they essentially pertain to their *subjectivity* as working individuals, that is, to their subjective

powers to consciously organise the transformation of the environment into a means for the reproduction of human life. It is only when those material determinations of the development of human productive subjectivity emerge in the course of history that the proletariat acquires the social powers necessary to abolish their alienated general social relation. Hence, what this line of thought suggests is that *the revolutionary political consciousness of the working class can only be a concrete mode of existence of their productive consciousness*.

This has important broader ramifications for the nature of the revolutionary movement itself. Because overlooking that material determination of the political consciousness of the working class necessarily leads to conceiving of the revolutionary process in purely formal terms, that is, as a *mere* transformation of social forms. But what this approach suggests is that what the revolutionary movement realises (its content) is, fundamentally, the transformation of the materiality of the productive forces of the human individual and, *therefore*, of their social forms of organisation and development. In other words, it is about a *material* mutation of the production process of human life, which takes concrete shape through a *social* transformation, which, in turn, expresses itself through a *political* action.

This means, in the first place, that the revolution does not consist in the simple appropriation of the objectified form of the productive forces engendered by capital, although subjecting them to another form of social organisation. This is, broadly speaking, the standard classical Marxist understanding of the nature of the communist revolution (starting with Lenin's socialist use of so-called 'Taylorism', but also including the Council Communist reduction of the communist programme to the demand to 'get rid of the bosses', i.e. self-management of existing material forms of the production process).[2] Moreover, this also means going beyond the well-known 'Western Marxist' correction that consists of adding that the transformation of the social forms of human activity needs to be complemented by the development of an alternative 'socialist technology', which would replace existing forms of the material conditions of social labour that have been 'moulded' by the needs of capital.[3] In this alternative version, the external relation between material forms of the life process

2 The formalism entailed by the Council Communist ideology of self-management has been insightfully highlighted many years ago by some currents of the so-called 'Neo-Bordigist Ultra-Left' in France (Négation 1973; Barrot and Martin 1974).

3 See, for instance, Murray 2004; Arthur 2003c. See also Dyer-Witheford 2000, Chapter 3, for a review of Marxist approaches to 'technology-as-domination'.

and social relations still persists. On the one hand, we have social relations. On the other, we have the materiality of the productive forces of the human individual. Since capitalist social relations have 'moulded' technology, the construction of a socialist society requires that both are transformed, as if it were possible to do one thing without doing the other. So conceived, the transformation of the material forms of the production process is once again reduced to an external objective condition, instead of being grasped as the immanent content of the communist revolution itself.[4]

In a nutshell, revolutionary practice is not about an external leap from capitalism to communism involving, on the one hand, the abolition of capital and, on the other, the construction of a communist society, as if they were different things. Hence, it is not that the historical powers of the capital form to develop the forces of production are exhausted and come to a halt, and then comes a social revolution which changes the social forms of the life process of humanity, in order to then set into motion the productive forces again, but now on a new basis. Rather, as a political action, working class revolution *is* the conscious organisation of that material transformation of the productive forces of the human individual through the change in the social forms of their organisation. This is why it makes no sense to consider that the 'objective or material conditions' for the revolution are ripe, but the 'subjective factor' is not. For those material *determinations* can have no concrete mode of existence and movement other than the consciously organised political action of the whole working class. To say that those material determinations can exist by themselves without the emergence of the fully conscious revolutionary subjectivity of the proletariat is as meaningless as the claim that value can unmediatedly exist in quantities of its substance and not in the form of money prices.[5]

Only because of all this does the revolutionary process transform both 'circumstances and human activity', i.e. involves 'self-change', as the third Thesis

4 In other approaches, it is conceived of as an ethical question, part of a 'moral theory of human perfectibility' (Murray 2003). See also Gould (1978), who finds in Marx's *Grundrisse* a critique of the injustices of capitalism and sees the development of the fully developed social individual, hence the historical emergence of human freedom, as the realisation of justice.

5 More generally, the question at stake in this discussion about the connection between productive forces and revolutionary consciousness is the difference between *immanent determination* of a form by its content (ideally reproduced through dialectics), and the exteriority of a lifeless mechanical relation between two self-subsistent entities (when grasped through logical representation).

on Feuerbach claims.[6] This, I think, is also the underlying meaning of Marx and Engels's well-known passage from the *The German Ideology*:

> Both for the production on a mass scale of this communist consciousness, and for the success of the cause itself, the alteration of men on a mass scale is necessary, an alteration which can only take place in a practical movement, a *revolution*; the revolution is necessary, therefore, not only because the *ruling* class cannot be overthrown in any other way, but also because the class *overthrowing* it can only in a revolution succeed in ridding itself of all the muck of ages and become fitted to found society anew.[7]

Hence the general determination of the communist revolution: to be the political form of the riddance of the 'muck of ages' engendered by the production

6 Marx 1976d, p. 4. The determination of revolutionary practice as a process involving self-transformation has been emphasised by various authors (Geras 1989; Barker 1995; Smith n.d.), who thereby provide a necessary warning against the uncritical glorification of existing forms of working class subjectivity as immediately 'fit to found society anew'. However, I think that, in most cases, this process of 'getting rid of the muck of ages' through 'self-transforming' political practice is seen in terms of the constitution of an abstract 'socialist culture of solidarity', with no reference to the materiality of the production process of human life. In other words, the question is idealistically seen as 'ethical' or 'cultural', but not fundamentally in terms of *productive subjectivity*. Lebowitz (2003) does grasp the need to focus on the latter. However, he sees the question as a matter of two different, externally related grounds for the development of the workers' revolutionary consciousness: on the one hand, the transformation of the materiality of the production process of human life and, on the other, the class struggle. By contrast, I am arguing that it is a question of the development of the materiality of human productive subjectivity taking concrete form through the revolutionary political action of workers. Mészáros provides perhaps one of the most suggestive approaches in this respect, explicitly addressing the need for determinate *material mediations* as the ground for the development of 'communist consciousness on a mass scale' and seeing the revolutionary process as the political *form* in which that material *content* is realised (1995, pp. 917–36). However, unilaterally sticking to the immediate concrete form of fragmentation and division through which capital's tendency for the production of universal productive subjects is realised, he cannot see the social necessity for the material transformation at stake as the *immanent* product of the alienated movement of the production of relative surplus value itself. The necessity of revolutionary subjectivity ultimately remains external to the general social relation presiding over the movement of modern society and is represented as consisting in the completion of a historic task that capital leaves unfinished. Again, revolution is seen as an external leap.

7 Marx and Engels 1976a, pp. 52–3.

of relative surplus value, that is, the form taken by the historical production of the subjectivity of the 'rich individuality which is as all-sided in its production as in its consumption, and whose labour also therefore appears no longer as labour, but as the full development of activity itself'.[8]

## Revolutionary Subjectivity as Scientific Subjectivity

If the simplest *content* of revolutionary consciousness entails the self-awareness about the workers' alienated subjectivity, the question immediately arises as to what is the specific *form* of consciousness capable of discovering the former. The answer to this question is self-evident in the very intellectual process I have been unfolding in this book. In effect, inasmuch as the *critique of political economy* entails the reproduction in thought of the concrete unity of all the determinations of social existence implied in the necessity for the abolition of capital, it becomes determined as *the self-consciousness of the working class of the social determinations of its revolutionary action as an alienated subject* – an alienated subject, however, that has developed the material powers and historic task to put its own alienation (and hence its existence as working class) to an end. On the other hand, drawing on the methodological insights found in the work of Iñigo Carrera,[9] I have attempted to demonstrate throughout this book that the critique of political economy embodies such a transformative power only by virtue of its specific, *dialectical form*. In the first part of the book, this was just stated although not fully demonstrated. If successful, my methodologically minded reading of Marx's 'mature' dialectical critique of political economy, understood as the unfolding of the determinations of capital leading to the social constitution of the revolutionary working class, should have substantiated that point.

But there was another fundamental claim, only tangentially touched upon in the book, whose justification remained incomplete. I am referring to the historical determinations behind the distinction I made between representational scientific thought (or logical representation) and dialectical knowledge. As argued before, whilst the former is the mode of scientific knowledge determined as a form of capital's reproduction, the latter is the mode of scientific knowledge determined as the conscious organisation of the practical critique of the capitalist mode of production. However, a proper grounding of this dis-

8 Marx 1993, p. 325.

9 Iñigo Carrera 1992 and 2008.

tinction was not possible at that stage of the book. It is only now that I have discussed the determinations of the production of relative surplus value through the system of machinery that I can properly address that question.

In effect, we have seen that it is that particular material form taken by capital's valorisation that calls into life the powers derived from the scientific regulation of natural and social processes. In this way, capital increasingly determines scientific knowledge as the general form of productive consciousness organising the life process of society. Furthermore, we have seen that this also means that the productive consciousness regulating the labour process ceases to be subordinated to the immediate subjective experience of the wage labourer. In other words, it becomes an objective consciousness. However, this is an objective consciousness which is not the expression of the 'development of human powers as an end in itself'.[10] It is determined as a concrete form of the expanded reproduction of capital through the production of relative surplus value. In other words, it is an objective consciousness bound to reproduce its essential determination as an alienated consciousness. As I have already shown, firstly in my discussion of commodity fetishism and later when dealing with the relationship between class struggle and the valorisation of capital, it is by falling prey to the inverted appearance as free consciousness taken by alienated consciousness that human beings reproduce their own alienation. In this sense, the objective character of scientific knowledge confronts a limit which it cannot trespass without ceasing to be a concrete form of capital's perpetuation: it must be strictly developed in such a form that it does not discover its own immanent determination as an alienated consciousness. Thus, whilst needing to be scientific – hence objective – in order to produce relative surplus value, productive consciousness as an attribute of capital must remain incapable of fully seeing through the appearances presented by the real movement of social life and, therefore, cannot become *fully* objective. It has to remain *ideological*. How are these two requirements of the reproduction of capital reconciled?

I think that the discussion of the difference between dialectical cognition and logical representation in the first part of the book provides the key to answer this question. For the very *form* of representational science (i.e. its *method*) condemns it to grasp the relations between real forms in their apparent externality, and, therefore, to stick to some inverted appearance presented by them. Moreover, in being incapable of reproducing the contradictory movement of the real by means of thought, this form of scientific knowledge leads to uncertainty about its own objectivity. It therefore has to seek the found-

10 Marx 1991, p. 959.

ation for its own objectivity outside of itself, in the alleged general rules of correct thinking – logic – guiding the thinking activity of an abstract subject of knowledge. In other words, it is an objective knowledge ultimately resting on *subjective* foundations and which is therefore unable ideally to reproduce the immanent self-movement of social and natural forms. Thus, we can now see the way in which the contradictory development of scientific knowledge within the boundaries of the reproduction of capital 'finds room to move', namely, by taking the form of *representational science*. As Iñigo Carrera emphatically argues, the historically specific determination of social existence (and hence of social consciousness) becomes therefore expressed in the very *form* of the process of scientific cognition of reality, i.e. in its *method*.[11] Since the mode of scientific cognition is a social form, as any other it must have a historical determination as well. Armed with that scientific consciousness, the political action of the working class becomes condemned to personify the need of capital to reproduce itself, instead of personifying the necessity to supersede itself into the free association of individuals.

Exactly the opposite line of reasoning applies to the form of consciousness that organises the action which, whilst alienated, in the course of its development transcends that very alienation. I am referring to the 'communist consciousness', the 'consciousness of the necessity of a fundamental revolution',[12] whose content, as we have seen, is the development of the 'control and conscious mastery of these powers' springing from 'the world-historical co-operation of individuals'.[13] This fully conscious organisation of the development of the social powers of the human being – 'the reality which communism creates'[14] – presupposes that the latter ceases to see the determinations of her/his social existence as an external force existing independently of the individuality of her/his conscious practical activity upon nature. And this can only be the product of a form of consciousness that is fully *objective* in character and that can therefore recognise and organise the immanent social determinations of human individuality beyond any appearance. This is recognised by Marx in the *Grundrisse*:

> The great historic quality of capital is to create this *surplus labour*, superfluous labour from the standpoint of mere use value, mere subsistence; and its historic destiny [*Bestimmung*] is fulfilled as soon as, on one side,

11 Iñigo Carrera 2008, pp. 252–3.

12 Marx and Engels 1976a, p. 52.

13 Marx and Engels 1976a, p. 51.

14 Marx and Engels 1976a, p. 81.

> there has been such a development of needs that surplus labour above and beyond necessity has itself become a general need arising out of individual needs themselves – and, on the other side, when the severe discipline of capital, acting on succeeding generations [*Geschlechter*], has developed general industriousness as the general property of the new species [*Geschlecht*] – and, finally, when the development of the productive powers of labour, which capital incessantly whips onward with its unlimited mania for wealth, and of the sole conditions in which this mania can be realized, have flourished to the stage where the possession and preservation of general wealth require a lesser labour time of society as a whole, and where *the labouring society relates scientifically to the process of its progressive reproduction*, its reproduction in a constantly greater abundance; hence where labour in which a human being does what a thing could do has ceased.[15]

Thus, in the communist association, not only will human activity take a mediated form, but as the social form of organisation of the universal development of 'human powers as an end in itself' through conscious co-operation, it will also elevate the social mediation of individual activity to new levels and forms. That is, the human process of metabolism will not return to the simplicity of pre-capitalist forms of social production, but, quite to the contrary, it will achieve even more complex forms than the ones produced under the alienated rule of capital. For the fully developed social individual, the problem at stake will be the integration of her/his individual productive action into the activity of a collective body composed out of the universal and all-round co-operation of human beings. And thought being the way in which the social forms of the life process express themselves in the human head, how can the regulation by means of thought of such a complex process of reproduction take the form of a consciousness not involving mediation? Certainly, then, social relations will

15 Marx 1993, p. 325, my emphasis. It is remarkable that in this passage Marx states that human beings only do that which is specifically human and cannot be done by 'things'. Although he does not say it explicitly, it seems obvious to me that much if not all of what is now done manually is among those tasks that can be done by 'things'. In other words, manual direct labour is one of those things that should be consigned to the dustbin of history by the communist revolution. 'Really free working' will fundamentally (if not exclusively) involve *intellectual* labour. This should come as no surprise, since it is the regulation of the life process by means of *thought* that, according to Marx, from the *Paris Manuscripts* right up to *Capital*, constitutes the specifically human form of the material life process.

become 'transparent' under the free association of producers. However, this will be the result not of an *immediate* insight,[16] but of a scientific consciousness that passes through all the mediations involved in the fully conscious organisation of what will be a highly complex form of human activity. The necessity for a scientific comprehension of the social determinations of human life will not disappear under communism, but will become the general form in which individuals organise their life activities. Paraphrasing Marx, there is no royal road to the self-conscious organisation of directly social human practice! As he put it already as early as the *Paris Manuscripts*,

> My *universal* consciousness is the *theoretical* form of that whose *living* form is the *real* community, society, whereas at present *universal* consciousness is an abstraction from real life and as such in hostile opposition to it. Hence the *activity* of my universal consciousness – as activity – is my *theoretical* existence as a social being.[17]

Yet social being takes in the capitalist mode of production an alienated form. Thus, in its first historical manifestation, this 'universal consciousness' emerges as an alienated attribute of capital, albeit of its immanent necessity to transform the materiality of the human reproduction process beyond the capital form. Whilst *necessarily scientific*, 'communist consciousness' must therefore acquire a form that allows it to penetrate all inverted appearances presented by social being in order to discover its own alienated nature. At this stage of my argument, it is self-evident what this form is: dialectical knowledge. Only this form of knowledge, as 'the reproduction of the concrete by means of thought', ideally expresses the material power to organise the communist abolition of capital. *Hence, whilst logical representation is the scientific method determined as a form of capital's reproduction, dialectical knowledge is the mode of scientific cognition determined as the form of capital's transcendence and, a fortiori, of the free association of individuals* (*'the reality that communism creates'*). In brief, it is a question not just of abolishing the separation between intellectual and manual labour through the reduction of the latter to 'quantitative and qualitative insignificance', but, fundamentally, of the revolution in the very general form of scientific intellectual labour itself.[18]

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16 Cf. Cohen 1972.

17 Marx 1992b, p. 350.

18 Inasmuch as it is determined to emerge for the first time in the course of history in the alienated form of the conscious organisation of the abolition of capital, dialectical knowledge initially takes the concrete form of *critique of political economy*. Once liberated from

## Revolutionary Subjectivity as Consciously Self-Organised Subjectivity

The rejection of the need for (dialectical) scientific knowledge to organise the transformation of the capitalist mode of production into the free association of individuals has generally come from the abstract critique of Leninist 'vanguardism and substitutionism' by so-called libertarian currents of Marxism.[19] Holloway's recent work is a case in point. For him, the postulation of the need for a scientific organisation of communist revolutionary activity can only lead to the separation between the 'intellectual elite' and the masses. In turn, this would mean that the revolution ceases to be the self-emancipation of the working class and becomes the changing of society by the self-proclaimed vanguard on behalf of the working class.[20]

Clearly, Holloway is not arguing for a complete refusal of the need for critical theory. He explicitly acknowledges that 'intellectual work is part of that struggle'.[21] However, afraid that this claim could lead him to intellectual elitism, he then hastens to add that although it is another expression of the class struggle, revolutionary thought does not enjoy any 'privileged role' in the practical critique of capital. The fully developed consciousness of the social determinations of alienated human activity is just another form of the critique of alienated labour, coexisting alongside social struggles based on more or less immediate consciousness. Or, in Holloway's own words, theory is simply 'a peculiar way of articulating our [the theorists'] participation in the conflict in which all participate'.[22] The real, material unity of theory and practice to be achieved by the critical-revolutionary activity of the proletariat thus dissolves into the purely formal unity consisting in the coexistence of 'critique in theory' and 'critique in practice'.

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its existence as an alienated attribute of capital existing in the heads of the self-abolishing proletarians, dialectical science does not wither away, but must acquire a new concrete form: *human* natural science or the *natural science of humanity* (Marx 1992b, p. 356).

19 This rejection is a particular expression of a more generalised 'cultural mood' in the present times of general political retreat of the working class. In the realm of theory, this mood is expressed in the emergence of postmodernism as the dominant ideological form taken by social theory. In the realm of practical politics, this acquires expression in the anti-intellectualism characterising the current 'anti-globalisation' movement. For concise suggestive reflections on this, see Aufheben 1992, pp. 1–2.

20 Holloway 2002a, p. 30.

21 Holloway 2002a, p. 63.

22 Holloway 2002a, p. 30.

By contrast, I think that when its concrete determinations are properly grasped, far from leading to a Leninist separation between 'party direction/intellectuals' and 'masses', the scientific organisation of political action actually constitutes its only genuine practical critique. In effect, the general material content of the conscious revolutionary action of the proletariat suffices to understand why it can definitely *not* take the form of the institutionalisation of the separation of the conscious organisation of that action from its execution proper. And this is not just a matter of an abstract moral superiority of radically democratic forms of social organisation over hierarchical ones. Rather, it is but a consequence of the materiality of the social transformation at stake, namely, the production of the consciousness about the social character of human transformative action as the general social relation reproducing human life. In other words, this is the consequence of the necessary *conscious* nature of such a collective process of social transformation, which can only be such precisely for being the organic unity of the conscious transformative practice of each individual. Only in this way can such action be fully conscious and thereby acquire the plenitude of its transformative powers.[23]

23 The reduction of the communist transformation to a question of radical democracy has been a longstanding characteristic of the anti-Stalinist left and has gained new life in recent times within the so-called anti-globalisation movement. This 'obsession' with democracy is an evidently understandable but *abstract* reaction of the revolutionary left to the bureaucratic experience of the Soviet Union (and also of Social Democracy in Western Europe). The critique of this 'formalist consciousness' with its 'fetishism of organisational forms' has also been one of the themes insightfully discussed by the 'Neo-Bordigist' ultra-left in France (Barrot and Martin 1974). As Goldner notes, the critique of capital from the perspective of radical democracy basically follows from the representation of capital as essentially a *hierarchical relation of power* (Goldner 1981). But as value-in-process, capital is a materialised form of social mediation that becomes the self-moving subject of human life, a determination that derives from the essentially unconscious form of social reproduction through the commodity form. Hence, the content of the communist transformation is not the democratisation of society, but the abolition of the determination of the human life process as the material bearer of the self-expansion of capital through the conscious association of fully developed social individuals. Inasmuch as its production involves the conscious organisation of collective human practice as an attribute borne by each human individual, one could anachronistically call that 'democratic'. But without a critique of the commodity form, money form, capital form and the abstractly free subjectivity of the private individual, the call for radical democracy mystifies rather than throws light on the communist revolution.

Thus, the monopoly over the conscious organisation of the general social character of human action by some individuals (let us say, the 'intelligentsia') can signal just one thing, namely, that the rest of the members of society are acting *un*consciously, uncritically accepting the appearance that the would-be leaders really are acting consciously, no matter how democratic the mediations between those two poles, or how much the leaders are predisposed to 'learn' from the spontaneous movement of the masses.[24] When Marx spoke of communism as the conscious association of individuals, he really meant it. And this is not just a matter of 'feeling like' associating with others, or of instinctively doing it under the pressure of external circumstances (even less a question of ethical duty), but more so of being fully and objectively aware of the social necessity of this association in the totality of its determinations.[25] On the other hand, this is why the reproduction in thought of the social determinations of the political action that accomplishes said transformation of the whole process of human metabolism (dialectics), must be, by its very essence, a collective class product, whose production involves *all* individuals concerned. The development of science as the practical critique of capital thereby involves not only the *transformation* of the mode of scientific cognition, but also its *generalisation*. To put it simply, dialectical knowledge (hence, 'communist consciousness') must become an attribute borne by each member of the self-abolishing proletariat as a whole, regardless of the particular form of productive subjectivity inherited from the different role played as partial organs of the production and circulation of capital with which they enter the revolutionary process. Only in this way can the 'genuine bond of consciousness and action' (Lukács) be established in the course of human history, thereby making the immediate *material* unity of theory and practice become the general social relation reproducing human life.

24 See Shandro 1995 for an interesting but futile attempt to save Lenin's theory of the party.

25 Thus it is in the very essence of dialectical knowledge to require the reproduction in thought of the social determinations of human purposeful activity in the singularity of each individual action. This is why, by its very form, dialectical cognition is inherently self-critical: on each occasion it is set into motion, it subjects its existing forms to criticism (Iñigo Carrera 1992). I shall return to this below.

## Revolutionary Subjectivity 'Proper' and the Revolutionary Conquest of the Political Power of the State

We have seen in the previous chapter that Marx's dialectical exposition in *Capital* culminates with the 'expropriation of a few usurpers by the mass of the people',[26] a process which he identifies as immediately coinciding with the 'point at which they [the centralisation of the means of production and the socialisation of labour] become incompatible with the capitalist integument', which therefore 'is burst asunder'.[27] I have already mentioned that this concise statement about the revolutionary transcendence of capital is rather problematic. The reason for this is that it conflates two qualitatively different determinations of the 'Historical Tendency of Capitalist Accumulation': the expropriation (hence abolition) of the bourgeoisie or capitalist class and the abolition of capital itself as a materialised social relation.

Yet this conflation between those two distinct (yet related) social processes lies at the basis of the traditional or orthodox Marxist conception of revolutionary subjectivity and the abolition of the capitalist mode of production. This conception actually follows from the ideological representation of the social relations of production as juridical property relations. In effect, socialism was seen as complete state ownership of the means of production by a workers' state. The proletarian conquest of state power alongside the expropriation of the bourgeoisie was accordingly represented as synonymous with the transcendence of the capitalist mode of production.[28] As should be evident from

26 Marx 1976g, p. 930.

27 Marx 1976g, p. 929.

28 See Chattopadhyay 1992, 1996 and 2010, for textual evidence of this conception of socialism in Soviet Marxism. In other words, socialism was seen as a *transitional society* between capitalism and communism. This distinction was usually legitimised with reference to Marx's discussion of a lower and higher phase of the society that supersedes the capitalist mode of production in the *Critique of the Gotha Programme* (Marx 1989a). However, as Chattopadhyay demonstrates in the works just cited, the orthodox Marxist differentiation between a socialist and communist society represents a misreading of Marx's argument in the *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, which referred to two phases *within* the communist association of individuals, interchangeably referred to as Communism and Socialism. Incidentally, this misreading is not exclusively a Soviet or orthodox Marxist feature. For instance, despite Camatte's otherwise radically unorthodox reading of Marx, in *Capital and Community*, he mistakenly posits the dictatorship of the proletariat as one of the *three* successive *post-capitalist* phases (the other two being 'lower socialism' and 'communism', as in the Leninist reading of Marx's discussion in the *Critique of the Gotha Programme*). See Camatte 1988, pp. 121–3, 139.

my critical reading of *Capital* and the *Grundrisse*, this conception of the overcoming of capitalism substantially differs from Marx's views.

Thus, whatever the ambiguities of Marx's formulation in the passage from the chapter on the 'Historical Tendency of Capital Accumulation' referred to above, a cursory reading of his so-called 'political writings' makes evident that he was very clear about the '*unity-in-difference*' between the expropriation of the bourgeoisie and the abolition of capital. To begin with, this is condensed in the political programme of the working class to be implemented through the revolutionary 'conquest of political supremacy' contained in the *Communist Manifesto*, whose *immediate* economic content unequivocally comes down to the absolute centralisation of capital in the form of state-property – hence the abolition of the bourgeoisie – and does not involve the abolition of the capitalist mode of production.[29] As Chattopadhyay competently shows,[30] for Marx the revolutionary conquest of political power together with the expropriation of the bourgeoisie were the *necessary forms* in which to *start* the process of transformation of the capitalist mode of production into the free association of individuals. But unlike the conception found in Lenin and orthodox Marxism in general, Marx was very clear that the political rule of the working class 'does not by itself signify the collective *appropriation by society*, and does not indicate the end of *capital*'.[31] The 'dictatorship of the proletariat' was, for Marx, a *period within the capitalist mode of production* – hence, not a non-capitalist transitional *society* – in which the latter was to be entirely revolutionised in every nook and cranny up to the point of fully preparing wage workers for their self-emancipation – hence for their self-abolition as working class.[32] This has several implications beyond those discussed in Chattopadhyay's rigorous but mainly exegetical commentary.

First, during that period, workers continue to be wage labourers. The sale of labour power as a commodity to a single state-owned capital for a wage continues to be the general *indirect* social relation regulating the establishment of the unity between production and individual consumption (and hence mediating the reproduction of the worker's life). In this sense, material reproduction as a whole is not *fully* socialised under those circumstances. Although the allocation of the total labour power of society in its different concrete

29 Marx and Engels 1976b, pp. 504–5. Strictly speaking, Marx and Engels's programme is even more timid. They suggest the *gradual* expropriation of the bourgeoisie, which would eventually lead to the absolute centralisation of capital as state property.

30 Chattopadhyay 1992, pp. 92–3.

31 Chattopadhyay 1992, p. 93.

32 Ibid.

forms is no longer privately organised in formally independent direct production processes, the part of the total product of social labour that corresponds to the reproduction of labour power still takes the commodity/value form.[33] Consequently, the process of metabolism does not attain social unity in a completely direct form and the social character of labour therefore continues to take the form of capital, i.e. of an objectified social power that dominates the direct producers. In effect, as with simple co-operation, the constitution of an immediately collective productive body is not yet the direct product of the fully self-conscious association of the producers, but is set into motion with the previous mediation of the sale of their labour power as private and independent individuals to the single state-owned capital. Therefore, whilst this figure of the collective worker now personifies the direct organisation of all the functions of the immediate production process in its totality, 'their co-operation only begins with the labour process, but by then they have ceased to belong to themselves'.[34] Their labour belongs to the total social capital, which now immediately exists as a singular capital that subsumes the co-operation of the collective labourer as a whole. In other words, in the reified form of money-as-capital, the materialised general social relation of workers still *pre-exists* and *autonomously sets into motion* their productive co-operation with the only alienated purpose of expanding its own magnitude, i.e. of producing surplus value.

In the second place, no matter how radically democratic is the self-government of the direct producers during the dictatorship of the proletariat (and Marx thought it would be),[35] they still confront the social determinations of their individual life activity as an alienated power.[36] Similarly to workers' co-operatives within an individual private fragment of social labour, general political self-government by wage labourers is tantamount to the self-management 'of the use of the means of production to *valorize their own labour*'[37] for the total social capital. That wage workers have dispensed with the mediation of the direct relation established with a capitalist or a state bureaucrat in the labour process does not change the fact that they are self-organising the *alienated objectification of their productive activity*. Certainly, they no longer submit their productive subjectivity to the consciousness and will of another person (or rather, personification). But they still have to submit their conscious action

33 Iñigo Carrera 2008, p. 38.

34 Marx 1976g, p. 451.

35 See Draper 1974, for a textual analysis of this point.

36 Iñigo Carrera 2008, p. 26.

37 Marx 1991, p. 571, my emphasis.

to the unity of society existing in the form of a self-activating objective process that they do not control in a fully conscious manner. The despotism and coercion of the production process of human life determined as material bearer of capital's valorisation process does not disappear. It only takes the concrete form of a democratically self-imposed compulsion – yet one that is objectively determined behind their backs – to expand the materialised social relation.[38] In other words, even if, for the sake of argument, we assume with Marx that the *Commune* was 'the political form at last discovered under which to work out the economical emancipation of Labour',[39] this communal *political* organisation still represents, *pace* Lebowitz,[40] a form of existence of the *capitalist state* and not a 'workers' state'.[41] The form determination of the state is to be the political mode of existence of the movement of the total social capital, i.e. the objectified embodiment of the direct organisation of the unity of the conditions of social reproduction in its alienated capital form. Neither the fact that this general political representation comes to be personified by the rule of wage workers as a class, nor the radically democratic character of its institutional or organisational structure transform this content of the state, the basis of which lies in the economic mediation of the unity of social labour through the commodity, money and capital forms. Yet I shall argue below that *precisely by virtue of this content of the state* the working class can achieve its self-abolition (and hence the abolition of both capital and the state) only through the 'conquest of political supremacy'.

Thirdly, this means that, although taking place in the form of a revolution, the political action of the working class that conquers state power and expro-

38 To make the point as clear as possible, it might be the coercion emanating from a democratically reached consensus in a universal assembly which, as long as its individual members continue to see themselves as private and independent, will still confront their species-powers as an external force, a 'general will' to which she/he must submit her/his activity. Thus, she/he will experience the mandates generated in the assembly (including attendance to the assembly itself) as an obligation, moral or legally sanctioned (even if she/he participated in the 'decision making' process). Only when the human being *objectively and fully consciously* recognises the social determinations of her/his individuality, in communism, will the unity of society cease to appear as an alien force that dominates the individual.

39 Marx 1986, p. 334.

40 Lebowitz 2003, pp. 189–96; 2009, Chapter 18.

41 I say 'for the sake of argument' because, in my view, in those sorts of grandiose statements Marx 'the militant' got carried away and came dangerously close to offering 'recipes for the cook-shops of the future'. A similar point could be made about many of Marx's arguments in the *Critique of the Gotha Programme*.

priates the bourgeoisie cannot be the product of a fully self-conscious subjectivity. Otherwise it would not continue to see the social determinations of human individuality as external to the latter and hence as objectively borne by the product of labour. It is not only an alienated action, but also one that is still unaware of its own alienated nature as the personification of the movement of the total social capital. In other words, the immanent content, which determines this action, still operates behind the backs of workers, who still see their political activity as an affirmation of their abstractly free subjectivity. By 'getting rid of the bosses', they now attain full *personal* 'self-determination' *as collective commodity producers and owners*, overcoming both the relative mutilation that their personally free productive consciousness experienced by virtue of the mediation of the figure of the capitalist in the direct process of production (and, one could add at this stage, in circulation); and, again assuming with Marx the 'Commune form' taken by the dictatorship of the proletariat, also that of 'state parasites, richly paid sycophants and sinecurists' in the general political representation of the unity of the total social capital. Nevertheless, the content and result of this political action is not the self-abolition of the working class, but rather its reproduction, hence that of the valorisation of capital.[42] The dictatorship of the proletariat represents the plenitude of the affirmation of the specific productive powers of the doubly free worker and, for this reason, it also constitutes the plenitude of her/his alienation: under these circumstances, the separation and alienation of the labourer from the means of production does not even need the mediation of the private property of the non-labourer.[43]

In this sense, the form of political subjectivity that undertakes the revolutionary expropriation of the bourgeoisie by conquering state power is *not* the one that expresses the historical necessity for the self-conscious transcendence of capitalist production and whose determinations have been the main focal points of this book's investigation. In other words, it is not *revolutionary subjectivity 'proper'*. It is only the expression of the clash of the production of relative surplus value with the mediation of private property, i.e. of the need for capital, as a moment of its own expanded reproduction, to take the form of a directly collective property, the immediate 'form of social capital (capital of directly associated individuals) in contrast to private capital'.[44] Even more so than the joint-stock companies mentioned by Marx in Volume III of *Capital*,

42 Iñigo Carrera 2008, p. 37.

43 Ibid.

44 Marx 1991, p. 567.

'this is the abolition of capital as private property within the confines of the capitalist mode of production itself'.[45]

In the first place, this politically enforced unification of the 'entire social capital as one single capitalist company' under state ownership is the necessary form in which the production of relative surplus value drives the alienated socialisation of personally free labour to its limits *within the capitalist mode of production*, i.e. it is the necessary mode of motion of the *absolute centralisation of capital*. But secondly, it is the form in which the total social capital gets rid of the figure of the capitalist when the very material conditions of production (and circulation) make her/him superfluous for the valorisation process. In effect, the complexity and scale of the co-operation of the collective worker of large-scale industry render the subjective powers of the capitalist incapable of personifying in the name of her/his capital even the unproductive labour of superintendence of the productive organs of the former.[46] Thus, as the separation of active function in the reproduction process from capital ownership reaches completion, its existence becomes a barrier to the accumulation of capital itself. The parasitic nature of the capitalist, though not yet of capital, thereby becomes materially concrete.[47] And note that this expresses an alienated necessity of the accumulation of the total social capital: the consumption of the capitalist represents a deduction of the potential surplus value that could be devoted to its self-expansion.

Yet given that the centralisation of capital is the most potent form for the production of relative surplus value and, *a fortiori*, for the alienated historical movement toward the constitution of directly socialised universal productive subjects, the conquest of political supremacy and the expropriation of the bourgeoisie become 'a necessary point of transition towards the transformation of capital back into the property of the producers' and 'towards the transformation of all functions formerly bound up with capital ownership in the reproduction process into simple functions of the associated producers, into social

45 Ibid.

46 As Marx himself notes (1976g, p. 549; 1991, pp. 510–11), with large-scale industry all the functions of supervision, coercion and management come to be personified by a partial organ of the collective labourer.

47 Incidentally, the confusion over the parasitic nature of the capitalist and that of the capital form as such underlies Negri's views of the present, 'Postfordist' forms of human co-operation as carrying in their immediacy – that is, without the mediation of additional material transformations – the potentiality to explode the capital relation. See Negri 1992, pp. 65–8; Negri and Guattari 1999, pp. 156–60.

functions'.[48] In this sense, the 'ultra-leftist' political programme for 'immediate communisation' is, broadly speaking, right *as far as the content of the political action of the fully developed, self-conscious revolutionary subject is concerned*.[49] It is wrong to think that such a form of subjectivity can emerge in the course of history without passing 'through long struggles, through a series of historic processes transforming circumstances and men',[50] and which can only come about as the result of the 'conquest of political supremacy' that undertakes the absolute centralisation of capital.[51]

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48 Marx 1991, p. 568.

49 See Théorie Communiste 2003; Aufheben 2003 and 2004; Endnotes 2008b and 2008a. A useful critical assessment and discussion of this political milieu can be found in the recent collection of essays edited by Noys (2011).

50 Marx 1986, p. 335.

51 The problem with the traditional view on the historical production of communism is not, as the aforementioned ultra-leftist milieu would have it, that it postulated the need for the mediation of the dictatorship of the proletariat (cf. Endnotes 2008b, p. 13). As argued above, the problem is that it conceived of the dictatorship of the proletariat as a *post-capitalist transitional society*, whereas my claim is that it is a necessary form taken by the development of the capitalist mode of production, and which is presupposed by the constitution of revolutionary subjectivity 'proper'. At least formally, one could argue that *Théorie Communiste*'s version of the 'communisation' thesis does acknowledge the need for historical mediations in the becoming of revolutionary subjectivity. Thus, they attribute a historical role to what they call the 'programmatism' of the 'old workers' movement' in the development of the capital relation up to the point at which it can be immediately abolished (Théorie Communiste 2008, pp. 155–66). Unlike the views of those associated with the *Troploin* journal (Dauvé 2008; Dauvé and Nesic 2008), they consider that the determination of the supersession of capital as the immediate content of the proletarian struggle is a *result* of the historical development of the capitalist class relation and not its 'invariant' character (a 'produced overcoming'; see Endnotes 2008a, pp. 215–16). However, in their idiosyncratic account of the history of the capital relation, so-called 'programmatism' is said to have exhausted its historical *raison d'être* in the development of the revolutionary working class *without* having actualised its full potentiality through the absolute centralisation of the total social capital on a world scale. From the perspective adopted in this book, such a situation is quite simply an oxymoron; the kind of subjectivity that immediately personifies the fully self-conscious abolition of the capital form through the revolutionary production of the communist association of individuals (i.e. revolutionary subjectivity 'proper') cannot skip over the necessary mediation of the *actual historical realisation* of the absolute centralisation of capital in the political form of the global dictatorship of the proletariat. At bottom, the more general underlying weakness of the approach of collectives such as *Théorie Communiste* and *Endnotes* (of which their unconvincing historical narrative is a concrete expression) is that despite their own claims to the contrary (Endnotes 2008a, p. 215), they fail to supersede the dualism between

This need to 'take power' is not simply grounded in strategic considerations, insofar as historical experience shows that refusal to take state power has only resulted in those aiming at revolutionary change being eventually thrashed by it.[52] Nor is it the way in which the workers can freely 'realize their own need for self-development'[53] by gradually depriving capital 'of its greatest weapon – the dependence of wage-labourers upon it for employment and for the ability to satisfy their requirements'.[54] Instead, it is grounded in the alienated nature of the workers' subjectivity and, therefore, in the alienated forms necessarily taken by its development and transformation.

As I argued in Chapter 6, the inverted character of capital-determined social existence implies that the subjectivity of commodity owners 'changes skin' only as the necessary mediation of the autonomised self-movement of forms of objectivity. Thus, workers cannot freely self-transform their form of subjectivity in order to develop a revolutionary political consciousness. Insofar as the latter is but an expression of the workers' *productive* subjectivity, the only way of unfolding the necessary underlying transformation of the production process is to 'force capital' to develop that specific revolution in the material conditions of social labour through the production of relative surplus value. As we have seen, workers can obviously not do this by turning their back on their objectified general social relation and its economic and political forms (i.e. capital and the state).[55] There is no exteriority to their

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objectivism and subjectivism. Thus, revolutionary action is not seen as an alienated action that personifies a necessity of the accumulation of the total social capital. Instead, it is ultimately conceived of as abstractly self-moving, yet 'conditioned' or 'shaped' by the historically changing objective configuration of the subsumption of labour to capital. In turn, the latter is idiosyncratically characterised in terms of 'the degree of integration of the circuits of reproduction of capital and labour-power' (Endnotes 2008a, p. 212) and not on the basis of the qualitative determinations of the productive subjectivity of the collective labourer.

52 Bensaïd 2005, p. 179.

53 Lebowitz 2003, p. 190.

54 Lebowitz 2003, p. 192.

55 See Holloway 2002b. Holloway's argument for the refusal to take political power is that the state is a form of existence of capital and that 'its own continued existence is tied to the reproduction of capitalist social relations as a whole'. This might be the case, but so is the very subjectivity of wage labourers. Would that mean that workers should refrain from acting politically in any form because they are a mode of existence of capital? Clearly, this is not Holloway's conclusion. The 'trick', as I have already argued, is that Holloway eventually glorifies a residual or pristine element of the worker's subjectivity, which remains external to capital.

determination as 'executors' of the alienated movement of their social being (the accumulation of the total social capital). On the contrary, they have to act upon it in order to make it reach its absolute limit as an alienated mode of development of productive subjectivity. And this can only come about through the absolute centralisation of the entire social capital as the property of a world state.[56] Only in this way can workers impel capital to unleash 'the historic processes transforming circumstances and men'[57] in the forms needed by their constitution as alienated yet fully conscious revolutionary subjects. As such bearers of revolutionary subjectivity 'proper', workers shall eventually become aware of their world-historic, truly emancipatory task: consigning capital-determined alienation to the dustbin of (pre)history through the production of the conscious association of the fully developed social individuals.[58]

## Final Words: Whose Revolutionary Action is It Anyway?

The reader might be tempted to grasp what I have been doing in this book as an exercise in 'Marxology', yet another *interpretation* of the works of Karl Marx. However, the very form of the dialectical method as discussed in this work already provides us with a first reason as to why it should not be seen as an 'interpretation of texts'.[59] As argued above, the point of departure of any materialist dialectical investigation must be the conscious organisation of the form to be given to *our* transformative action in order to realise with the latter the potentialities existing in our reality (the here and now) to 'change the world'. That is why I have been referring to this book as a *critical reading* of Marx's work, a necessary moment of the broader question of the positive development of the critique of political economy, which in turn is but the conscious organisation of the practical abolition of capital.

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56 Iñigo Carrera 2008, pp. 37, 124.

57 Marx 1986, p. 335.

58 Note that the distinction between the absolute centralisation of capital through the conquest of political supremacy and the revolutionary abolition of the capital form is essentially analytic. It refers to two necessary *qualitative* 'moments' of the transcendence of the capitalist mode of production into the free association of individuals or communism. Whether they will crystallise as two neatly defined historical periods, or as phases of a single historical process, is something that cannot be said today without, again, relapsing into providing 'recipes for the cook-shops of the future'.

59 Iñigo Carrera 2008, p. 317.

In this sense, what should interest the contemporary reader of Marx's works is not 'what he really said', but rather the development of the objective knowledge of the social determinations of *contemporary* social forms of existence of capital and, fundamentally, of *our* political action among its concrete forms. As argued earlier, this process cannot be spared from the development of the laborious analytical journey from the concrete to the abstract, and the subsequent synthetic return from the abstract to the concrete. In this endeavour, the reading of Marx's works, i.e. of socially pre-existing objectifications of dialectical knowledge, can only serve to *enhance* the potency of our process of cognition. In effect, inasmuch as it is an original development from the *individual* point of view but a process of *re*-cognition as far as its *social* character is concerned, we can engage in the inquiry with the advantage of being able to individually appropriate already existing social powers of the 'general intellect', thereby giving our own process of self-knowledge increased agility and efficiency ('real economy of time', as Marx puts it in the *Grundrisse*).[60]

On the other hand, this necessity to *re-cognise* all the mediations involved in the forms of present-day social being is what gives the very form of dialectical cognition an intrinsically *self-critical* quality. Thus, in my presentation of the different forms of capital as the alienated subject of modern social life through the reconstruction of Marx's texts, I was both following the immanent necessity of those forms *and*, in the very same movement, providing a critique of Marx's own discoveries. As we have seen, one of the critical results of this investigation has been the awareness of the incompleteness of the unfolding of the determinations of revolutionary subjectivity in *Capital*. A huge gap exists between Marx's exposition of the transformations of the *materiality* of the productive subjectivity of the collective labourer and the *politically* revolutionary subjectivity outlined in the end of Volume I of that work. Although I argued that the core elements for such a systematic dialectical presentation of the social necessity of revolutionary subjectivity could be found in the *Grundrisse*, it was necessary to put together those pieces – scattered in an unpublished manuscript – and integrate them as necessary mediations into the reproduction in thought of the qualitative determinations of the real subsumption of labour to capital.

Furthermore, in this concluding chapter I tried to go beyond Marx in the specification of the determinations of the revolutionary subject. I essentially did this by explicitly addressing aspects of revolutionary subjectivity that, I think, are only implicit in Marx's work (although they certainly *are* there):

60 Iñigo Carrera 2008, pp. 317–18.

namely, its alienated nature; its being a concrete expression of the historical transformations of productive subjectivity; the specific form of its essentially scientific character (hence the historicity of scientific method); and finally, the *materiality* of its organisational form (the overcoming of the separation between 'conception' and 'execution' in the political action of the working class).

And yet, even if including more concrete mediations than Marx, this book evidently still remained at a considerably high level of abstraction. As much as Marx himself, I also considered 'bourgeois society in the long view and as a whole'.[61] That is, with the exception of some digressions in passing, I only addressed the *essential determination* and *general tendency* behind revolutionary subjectivity, with no attention to the concrete forms in which the latter unfolds in the course of the history of capitalist development and, more importantly, in the *contemporary* forms of the essentially global accumulation of capital. On the other hand, I believe that the approach presented here does provide us with the key to such an investigation, namely, the movement of the twofold contradiction between universality and particularity, and between the expansion and degradation of the productive subjectivity of the different organs of the collective labourer, as it springs from the production of relative surplus value.[62]

As a necessary moment of the class struggle, a most urgent task arises for that partial organ of the collective labourer that is nowadays responsible for the production of the critical scientific knowledge of capitalist social forms (i.e. communist intellectual labourers). What is required is dialectical research on contemporary concrete forms in which the alienated development of the productive subjectivity of the workers towards its fully developed universality realises itself through its own negation, that is, by fragmenting the different partial organs of the collective labourer and by keeping the productive attributes of the labourers (even when they are expanded as in the case of intellectual labourers) miserably bound to being those required by the material forms of the production of relative surplus value.

Needless to say, and at this stage of our investigation this might sound redundant, this does not entail an abstractly theoretical interest, but is the

61 Marx 1993, p. 712.

62 See Iñigo Carrera 2008, Chapter 2; Grinberg and Starosta 2009 and 2014; Starosta 2010, for more concrete discussions of the contemporary configuration of the global economy based on the approach that informs this book. Charnock, Purcell and Ribera-Fumaz (2014) also draw some of the implications of this perspective for the investigation of crisis-ridden dynamics of capital accumulation in Spain.

necessary method for discovering the form of political action that could mediate the immediate needs of workers with the 'historical interests of the proletariat as a whole', i.e. the development of the productive subjectivity of the global collective worker beyond its alienated capitalist form.